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April 14, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing and Debriefing of the House Minority Leader, April 11, 1975

25X1 [redacted] and I spent an hour with Congressman Rhodes discussing his recent trip to China and providing him a current update on South Vietnam and Cambodia. Mrs. Clara Posey, Mr. Rhodes' personal secretary who had been with him in China, joined us. We gave the Congressman a packet of FBIS material on his visit.

I began with a brief rundown on the battlefield situation in South Vietnam and Cambodia. The Congressman did not raise the question about whether additional aid could change the situation, although later in the conversation he volunteered his own view that Vietnam was gone regardless of what was pumped into it. The Congressman, incidentally, was quite familiar with various Vietnamese personalities and ARVN combat units. He felt someone, he was not quite sure who, was remiss in not "kicking Thieu in the ass."

Congressman Rhodes commented that the Chinese Foreign Minister dwelt more on the Middle East than he did on the subject of Taiwan. The US was taken to task for its support of Israel and lack of support for the PLO which, the Foreign Minister said, deserved its place in the sun too. Mr. Rhodes did not sense any compelling urgency on the matter of Taiwan. He did remark that the Chinese had seemed upset over the US cancellation of a cultural troupe visit. The Chinese claimed cancellation of the visit, because the group's repertory included a song on Taiwan, was in violation of the Shanghai communique. The subject was dropped when the Congressman replied that we deleted a number from one of our cultural programs at Chinese request.

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The delegation met with Teng Hsiao-ping whom Mr. Rhodes found somewhat cocky. Teng, for example, took the occasion of this first meeting to point out that he was simply a country boy who had made good, very good. Teng also was the only Chinese official who seemed to make much of a thing about the Russians. Mr. Rhodes reported that the Chinese very obviously did not want to see a reduced US troop commitment in Europe.

Chou en-Lai was reported "in hospital." Little mention was made of Mao and then only pro-forma. The Congressman did not remember senior Chinese officials referring to Mao at all. Chu Teh, the 89-year-old chief of state, was trotted out for the delegation. Mr. Rhodes described Chu as suffering from senility. The Congressman remarked that Richard Nixon remained quite popular with the Chinese.

The Chinese did not raise the subject of Indo-China and it was mentioned only once when Mr. Rhodes discussed the MIA's with the Foreign Minister who told the Congressman he had best raise that subject with the North Vietnamese.

From what he could see himself, and from what he was told, Mr. Rhodes got the feeling that this was a fairly good crop year for the Chinese. Mrs. Posey remarked that the markets in Peking had much less in the way of foodstuffs than did those in Canton and she noticed queues forming at food stores in Peking.

Mr. Rhodes stated that during one boat trip near Shanghai they observed a number of Chinese naval craft including some KOMAR's. He managed to get some pictures before his hosts asked him to put his camera away. We will make arrangements to get some of these photos.

All in all, Mr. Rhodes felt the Chinese hoped to maintain a respectable relationship with the United States, but that they are not going to sacrifice any of their basic policies.

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I proposed a periodic intelligence briefing for Mr. Rhodes. He indicated he would like this very much and we shall make arrangements to go forward.

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